

Medical Officer's Annual Report for the Year 1945.

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The Minister of Health has directed that the Report for 1945 shall again be abbreviated and confined to essential matters and exceptional measures. He asks that information shall be included on the steps taken to combat infestation and on the state of water supplies.

Statistics are to be preserved but not included.

The general health of the population remained good and there was no unusual prevalence of any epidemic disease.

Immunisation against diphtheria proceeded satisfactorily. It was estimated that in the middle of 1945 73% of the child population aged 5 to 15 were immunised, and 59% of those aged under 5. Comparable figures for the end of the year are not available because an alteration was made by the Ministry of Health in the form of return and method of compiling statistics.

Infestation. The prevalence of Scabies and Pediculosis decreased considerably and is no longer a serious problem. At the same time facilities for dealing with these complaints also diminished. The Minor Ailment Clinic conducted at the Ferndown First Aid Post closed early in 1945, and so did the Blandford Isolation Hospital which was available for treating the more serious cases. There remained only the County Council's Minor Ailment Clinic in Wimborne and even this is now closed since the beginning of 1946. This Council now has no means of any kind for offering treatment and cleansing to persons suffering from verminous conditions.

Water Supplies.

Nine Parishes are provided, some only partly, with piped supplies. The remaining 16 Parishes are dependent on wells, or in a few areas on stored rainwater.

Six separate waterworks supply the nine Parishes, viz the Bournemouth, Poole and West Hants Works, two smaller works belonging to this Council and one to a private estate. The majority of the houses so supplied have water laid on internally. External standpipes are the method in a few cases.

In some parts of the District the wells yield a water of very inferior quality. In other parts the quantity is deficient and serious shortage of water often occurs. It may be said in general that the water supply of those parts of the district without piped supplies is bad and in urgent need of improvement. The Council has a comprehensive scheme for doing this in an advanced state of planning.

Bacteriological examinations 14 samples were taken from the water going into supply from the Council's two works at Verwood and Cranborne. Two of these only gave a bad result. They were taken on the same day from the Verwood supply. No source of contamination was found to account for them. Exceptionally heavy rain was the probable cause, the surface springs which are the source probably being affected by the rain.

Sewerage.

In mentioning the Council's schemes for the comprehensive new water supplies sewerage must not be left out. It should in fact come first, and is included in the plans. It is a particularly urgent matter in the semi-urban area at the South East corner of the District. This area has for many years had a piped water supply but no sewerage. Cesspools and soakage pits are the method of disposal and it happens that the subsoil formation and water level are entirely unsuited to these. Constant trouble from overflowing cesspools and choked soakaways occurs and gives rise to most insanitary state of affairs.

The Council had a sewerage scheme ready before the war and would like to get to work on it at once but are held up by negotiations with a neighbouring Local Authority on whose decision the nature and location of the disposal works depends.

Refuse Collection.

The collection of refuse and tins in the Rural District remains one of the Council's outstanding problems. An order was placed in July last for the supply of a suitable vehicle but in spite of repeated applications this has not yet been delivered. Efforts have been made to obtain sufficient labour to operate the scheme proposed but so far the response has been unsatisfactory.

Council Offices,

29, West Borough,

April, 1946.

L. B. Scott, M.D., D.P.H.

Medical Officer of Health.